

## June 4, 2003: Bansal, Gaer, Ramirez, Shea, and Young appointed to Commission

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WASHINGTON - Congressional leaders have reappointed three currently serving Commissioners and appointed two new Commissioners to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), an independent and bipartisan federal agency. The Commissioners are Preeta Bansal, Felice D. Gaer, Bishop Ricardo Ramirez, Nina Shea, and Michael K. Young. The Commission consists of nine voting Commissioners and the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, who is a non-voting member. Three Commissioners are selected by the President, two by the leaders of the President's party in Congress, and four by the congressional leaders of the political party that is not in the White House. Commissioners serve for one- or two-year terms and are eligible for reappointment. Senate Minority leader Thomas Daschle appointed Preeta Bansal of Lincoln, Nebraska, to the USCIRF. Preeta Bansal is a Visiting Professor of Constitutional Law at the University of Nebraska College of Law. Until 2001, she served as the Solicitor General of the State of New York. Ms. Bansal is a graduate of Harvard-Radcliffe College and Harvard Law School, where she was supervising editor of the Harvard Law Review. She served as a law clerk to Justice John Paul Stevens of the United States Supreme Court (1990-1991) and to Chief Judge James L. Oakes of the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit (1989-1990). Prior to her appointment as New York Solicitor General, Ms. Bansal practiced law with Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher in New York City (1996-1999), and previously with Arnold & Porter in Washington, D.C. She also served in the Clinton Administration (1993-1996) as counselor to Assistant Attorney General Joel Klein in the United States Department of Justice (Antitrust Division), and as Special Counsel in the Office of the White House Counsel. House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi reappointed Felice D. Gaer, who is the Commission's current Chair. Ms. Gaer served on the Commission's Executive Committee from September 2001 to June 2002. She is the Director of the Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights of the American Jewish Committee. She is a member of the Committee Against Torture, a 10-person United Nations expert body that reviews reports by governments on their compliance with the Convention Against Torture, a treaty ratified by over 130 countries. Nominated by the United States and elected in 1999, she is the first American to serve on the Committee. Ms. Gaer was appointed as a public member of nine U.S. delegations to UN human rights negotiations between 1993 and 1999, including the UN Commission on Human Rights, the World Conference on Women, and the World Conference on Human Rights. She is also a member of the steering committee of Human Rights Watch/Eurasia, and is a member of the International Human Rights Council of the Carter Center. Ms. Gaer is the author of more than 25 articles on international human right topics. In 1995, she was awarded the Alumnae Achievement Award from Wellesley College. Senator Daschle has also appointed The Most Reverend Ricardo Ramirez of Las Cruces, New Mexico. Bishop Ramirez is currently Bishop of Las Cruces, New Mexico. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1966. Bishop Ramirez was named Titular Bishop of Vatarba and Auxiliary Bishop of San Antonio in 1981. In 1982 he became the first Bishop of the Diocese of Las Cruces, New Mexico. He holds a B.A. from the University of St. Thomas, an M.A. from the University of Detroit, a Doctor of Laws honoris causa from Neumann College, a Doctor of Divinity honoris causa from the University of St. Michael's College, and a Doctor of Humane Letters honoris causa from Siena Heights University. Bishop Ramirez attended St. Basil's Seminary in Toronto, Canada, and Seminario Conciliar in Mexico City, Mexico. House Majority leader Dennis Hastert reappointed Nina Shea, who is the Director of the Center for Religious Freedom of Freedom House in Washington, D.C. She has been an international human rights lawyer for 25 years and has for 18 years focused specifically on the issue of religious persecution. Before her appointment to this Commission, on which she has served from the beginning, Ms. Shea served on the Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom to the U.S. Secretary of State. Ms. Shea has organized and sponsored numerous fact-finding missions to Sudan, China, Egypt, and elsewhere and has testified regularly before Congress about the governments of these countries. She is the author of *In the Lion's Den*, a book on anti-Christian persecution around the world. She was appointed as a public delegate on the U.S. delegation to the UN Commission on Human Rights in 2001. Senate Majority leader William Frist reappointed Michael K. Young, who is the Commission's current Vice Chair. He served as the Commission's Chair from September 2001 to June 2002 and as its Vice Chair from June 1999 to June 2000. Dean Young joined the George Washington University Law School in the summer of 1998. Prior to that, he was the Fuyo Professor of Japanese Law and Legal Institutions at the Columbia University School of Law. At Columbia, he also served as Director of the Center for Japanese Legal Studies, the Center for Korean Legal Studies, and the Project on Religion, Rights and Religious Freedom. Dean Young has been a Visiting Professor and Scholar at the Law Faculties of the University of Tokyo, Waseda University and Nihon University. He has also been a Japan Foundation Fellow at Columbia University. During the Administration of President George H. W. Bush, he served as Ambassador for Trade and Environmental Affairs, Deputy Under Secretary for Economic and Agricultural Affairs, and Deputy Legal Advisor to the U.S. Department of State. He currently serves as a member of the Brown v. Board of Education 50th Anniversary Commission and the Trade and Environmental Policy Committee, Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, Executive Office of the President.

Felice D. Gaer, Chair

- Dean Michael K. Young, Vice Chair Preeta Bansal Richard Land Bishop William F. Murphy Bishop Ricardo Ramirez Leila Nadya Sadat Nina Shea Ambassador John V. Hanford III, Ex-Officio Joseph R. Crapa, Executive Director